

Our Father in Heaven

Matthew 6:9

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connect groups

PATH

In honor of Father's Day, Pastor Skip unpacks a familiar but distinctive teaching of Jesus, a passage of Scripture that highlights God as our Father. Using the first phrase of the text known as The Lord's Prayer—a prayer Jesus taught to His disciples—Pastor Skip looks at four aspects of this profound petition, noting four *-ships* we sail through in life:

I. Relationship

II. Lordship

III. Fellowship

IV. Guardianship

POINTS

Relationship

- *Father* denotes relationship, an intimate acquaintance, a family/filial term.
- In ancient times, God as Father was entirely unknown. Greek and Roman people viewed the gods as distant and unknowable.
- The Jewish people viewed God as ruler and Master, as King of the universe. They knew God as the Father of the patriarchs and the nation of Israel, but not as a Father to individuals.
 - Proper names for God in Hebrew include *Adonai*, meaning *Lord* or *Master*ⁱ and *Shadday* meaning *Almighty*ⁱⁱ.
 - God's name was considered so holy and unutterable that Jews used *HaShem*, the *Name*, instead of *God*.
- Jesus was the first rabbi to call God *Father*. The word Jesus used is *Abba* meaning *Father, Daddy*ⁱⁱⁱ—a very intimate term. In Jesus' day, this was revolutionary. Jews sought to kill Jesus because He spoke of God as His Father (see John 5:16-23).
- In the Gospels alone, Jesus referred to God as Father 165 times. Only once did He call God something else: God. On the cross He asked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). At that moment, Jesus was the sin-bearer; taking on our sin broke His intimacy with His Father. Also, Jesus was quoting and fulfilling Old Testament Scripture (see Psalm 22:1).
- **Probe:** As J.I. Packer stated, "If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father." How do you see God? Like the Greeks, distant and

dangerous? Or like Jesus, close and relational? What are the attributes of God that make Him personal and intimate?

Lordship

- God as Father implies we are His children. We have a relationship with Him and relationship is tied to respect, to His lordship. We are to be "imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).
- Christians are to love God more than anything, even more than family (see Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 14:25-33).
- As Christians, we seek God's will on Earth "as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). We should be concerned about doing God's will in the world. Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father" (John 14:21).
- There are two types of people: one says, "Thy will be done," the other says, "My will be done."
- **Probe:** *Lordship* is defined as supreme power or rule. What does it mean for Christ to be Lord of your life? What area(s) in your life have you yet to give to Christ to inhabit and reign over? What's holding you back?

Fellowship

- The word *Our* implies that there are other children in God's family. In fact, there are no singular pronouns—no *me* or *I*—the pronouns are all plural: *we*, *us*, and *our*.
- "God sets the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6). We are collectively the body of Christ.
- There is an imbalance in the Evangelical Church that places the emphasis on a

personal relationship with God over our responsibility to others. Yes, we have a personal relationship, but it should not be a private relationship,

- *One another* is found in the New Testament eighty-seven times. There is no place for American individualism in the body of Christ; we need one another.
- A relationship with the Father leads to fellowship with the Father.
- **Probe:** *Fellowship* is defined as a friendly association of shared interests, companionship and closeness. When you think of fellowship with God, what words or ideas come to mind?

Guardianship

- The phrase *in heaven* connotes God's resources. God is God, enthroned in heaven and Lord of all; He has every resource at His disposal.
- "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases" (Psalm 115:3).
- *Our Father in heaven* gives perspective, showing that the Lord has all power, authority and sovereignty. We tend to forget God's perspective: above all, seeing everything.
- Because God is our Father, we need not live in fear. Because God is our Father, we are never alone. Because God is our Father, we don't have to live a selfish life. Because God is our Father in heaven, there is no limit to His power.
- **Probe:** A guardian is a defender, protector, and keeper. How has God protected and defended you, thereby acting as your guardian? Discuss a specific time when God guarded your heart or life.

PRACTICE

Connect Up: God is our Father. Discuss some characteristics of a father that the Lord encompasses. For example, He is our protector and strength, but He also demonstrates mercy and love. What are other fatherly characteristics you can think of?

Connect In: How do the four words used in this teaching to describe our relationship with God also describe our relationship with one

another in the church? Discuss the following:

- Church is a place of relationships (see Colossians 3:16; 1 John 1:7).
- Church is a place where we serve the same Lord, but do not lord it over others (see Matthew 20:25; 1 Peter 5:3).
- Church is a place for fellowship (see Hebrews 10:25).
- Church is a place of guardianship, of love (see John 13:35).

Connect Out: Depending on a person's relationship with their earthly father, the fatherhood of God may be a difficult idea for some. How would you describe God's fatherly characteristics to an unbeliever who didn't have a good relationship with his or her father? Consider Psalm 103:13; Luke 15:11-32; Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; James 1:17; 1 Peter 1:3.

ⁱ Bible Hub, "Adonai," 2016, <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/113.htm>, accessed 06/18/18.

ⁱⁱ Bible Hub, "Shadday," 2016, <http://biblehub.com/str/hebrew/7706.htm>, accessed 06/18/18.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bible Hub, "Abba," 2016, <http://biblehub.com/str/greek/5.htm>, accessed 06/18/18.

^{iv} J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, 1973, p. 182.